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THE EARLY SETTLEMENT OF THE JEWS IN SOUTHERN ITALY.¹

THE precise date of the appearance of Jews at Rome is uncertain. The embassies sent there by the Maccabean Judah (in 168 B.C.), and later on by his brothers Jonathan (143 B.C.) and Simon (141-139 B.C.) to conclude a treaty of alliance with the Roman Republic do not mention Jews at Rome. It is unlikely that a part of the Ambassadors should have settled at Rome, or that Alexandrian Jews emigrated to the Roman capital. Possible, however, it is that Jews were brought to Rome from Asia Minor about 89 B.C., during the Mithridatic war, although no mention is made of the fact by Roman writers. Certain it is that Pompey, after the conquest of Jerusalem (63 B.C.), transported to Rome many Jews as hostages. Coming as slaves, they were soon liberated by their masters, to whom they probably rendered themselves troublesome by their strict adherence to the Jewish rites.³ When they later obtained the Roman citizenship, they settled on the right side of

¹ The following four essays will be referred to in the notes by the names of the authors only, viz., Levy, Ascoli, Graetz and Schürer:—

a) *Epigraphische Beiträge zur Geschichte der Juden*, von Dr. M. A. Levy, in the *Jahrbuch für die Geschichte der Juden*, vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1861), Article V.

b) *Iscrizioni inedite o mal note, Greche, Latine, Ebraiche di antichi sepolcri giudaici del Napolitano*, edite e illustrate da G. I. Ascoli, in the *Atti del IV. Congresso Internazionale degli Orientalisti*, Firenze, 1880, pp. 239-354.

c) Professor Graetz's article on it under the title, *Die alten jüdischen Katakombeninschriften in Süditalien* (*Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Judenthum*, vol. xxix. (1880), pp. 434-451.)

d) *Die Gemeindeverfassung der Juden in Rom in der Kaiserzeit nach den Inschriften dargestellt*, von Emil Schürer. Leipzig, 1879. 4to.

² Schürer, p. 5.

³ *Ib.*, p. 6.

the Tiber (*Trastevere*), organised themselves into a community and soon gained considerable influence. This can be seen from Cicero's defence of Flaccus (59 B.C.).

We shall not follow up their vicissitudes under the various emperors. For our purpose it is sufficient to mention that as the Jews had in Rome synagogues, their own jurisdiction and their own cemeteries, their number must have been large, and they naturally must have wanted men to instruct them in the observance of the ceremonies practised in and out of the synagogues, and above all to settle their differences in matters of jurisdiction. We do not know how far the Jews in Rome were acquainted with the ceremonial laws, for no document has reached us on this subject. But we may suppose that practically they observed the ceremonies of the Jewish ritual according to the Pharisaic interpretation, and that they followed some rules for the order of the prayers, probably not written down, but orally preserved by the authorities of the synagogue. For the lessons of the Pentateuch and the Prophets they followed most likely the usage of the Palestinian synagogues. Whether the prayers were recited and the lessons read in Hebrew or in Greek we cannot say for certain; most likely it was done in both languages in different synagogues, for we shall see that there was at Rome a synagogue called *Ebraion* or Hebrew,¹ where probably Hebrew was used for the prayers and the lessons. That Greek was the predominant language with the Jews at Rome may be supposed from the early epitaphs, which we shall mention presently, the only authentic documents concerning the early Jewish community in Rome and in Southern Italy. They are nearly all in Greek, a few in Latin, and were recognised as Jewish only by the emblems of the palm branch (*Lulab*) and the citron (*Ethrog*), and also by the word שלום "peace," written mostly in Hebrew characters.²

The Jewish cemeteries hitherto known in Rome are:—

¹ See below, p. 608.

² Ascoli, p. 241.

1. At the *Porta Portensis*, most likely the burial-place for the Jewish inhabitants of Trastevere, discovered in 1602, but no longer to be traced; 2. In different parts of the *Via Appia*; and 3. At *Porto*, at the mouth of the Tiber. In the epitaphs we find the following titles of officers of the Jewish synagogues, which we shall enumerate without trying to identify all of them:—1, The *Γερουσιάρχης*, or the chief of the Gerousia, *i.e.*, of the Elders (זקנים). This title shows the existence of a Gerousia at Rome, but not one for the whole congregation, as was the case with the Jews in Alexandria, but only for separate synagogues.¹ 2, The *Ἀρχοντες*, whose office is uncertain, unless it is synonym of the following office.² 3, The *Ἀρχισυνάγωγος*, the chief of the synagogue (ראש הכנסת). 4, The *ὑπηρέτης*, a title which also occurs Luke iv. 20, A. V. “minister,” (חזן). 5, *πατέρες* and *μητέρες συναγωγῶν*, in Latin “mater synagogorum”; these are unknown in Talmudic literature; the title is perhaps equivalent to פֿרנס, and possibly identical with the title *Προστάτης*, which also occurs in the Jewish epitaphs. Professor Schürer³ mentions two other titles, which seem to be too doubtful, and are therefore omitted here. Amongst these functionaries certainly some directed the services in the various synagogues, of which the following are mentioned in the epitaphs:—The Augustan, the Agrippian, the Bolumni (Volumni), all three probably named after friends or benefactors of these synagogues; the Campesioi, probably named after the *Campus Martius*; the Siburesoi, called after the Subura, the name of a street in the noisiest quarter of Rome; the Aibreon (Ebraion), the synagogue where probably the service was in Hebrew, or the Hebrew vernacular of the time; the Elaias, or Eleaz, possibly named

¹ See below.

² Suggested by our learned friend Mr. H. J. Mathews, M.A., Exeter College, Oxford, according to Matthew ix. 18, Mark v. 22, and Luke viii. 41, 49, where the two titles are given to Jairus.

³ Pages 18 to 32.

after the congregation of the Jews coming from Elea; (possibly Elea is a corruption of Elijah the prophet); the Rhodion, named after the congregation of the Jews who came from Rhodes (we find, indeed, in the Talmud¹ synagogues named after the place whence the congregation originated); lastly, the Kalkaretision, a name not yet explained, the reading of it being uncertain.

There were, perhaps, other synagogues at Rome which may be found in still unearthed epitaphs. Usually the synagogue was also the house of study, as was the case with the Temple. Here the Roman Jews could have found opportunity for getting instruction. Indeed, the following inscription mentions the function of a teacher. We read here:—*Ἐνθάδε κείτε Μνασέας μαθητῆς σοφῶν καὶ πατὴρ συναγωγῶν*. Menasse is thus called the pupil of wise men, which is the equivalent of the expression תלמיד חכם²; he is also a father of synagogues. The physician Todos or Theodoros, a Roman, is quoted as having made a new rule for the meals of the Passover night, and he was such an important man that the Rabbis did not dare to attack him for this innovation.³ A Rabbi Palatin is mentioned as coming from Rome.⁴ Mathityah ben Harash went to Rome to found a school.⁵

The Palestinian schools were in constant communication with Rome, where money was collected for their subsistence. The visit to Rome of Gamaliel II. with some of his colleagues,⁶ had no doubt left traces affecting the study of the ritual law. Both of Todos and Gamaliel it is said that they expounded their teaching publicly.⁷ Philo reports the

¹ Compare בנישאת דרבלאי (Jer. T. *Shabbath* IV. 8a); בנישאת דרומאי (B. T. *Megillah*, fol. 26b).

² Levy, p. 317.

³ Jer. Tal. *Moed Katon*, איש רומי הנהיג את אנשי תודוס (תיאודורוס). Todos scarcely lived before Hillel, as said by Zunz, *Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden*, p. 358, note c.

⁴ Zunz, *ibidem*. Levy's *Lexicon*, s. v.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 348, note a.

⁶ *Mishnah Erubin*, IV. 1.

⁷ Zunz, *ibid.*, p. 348, note a.

teaching on Sabbath in the synagogues at Rome.¹ From the great number of proselytes made at Rome, we may judge that the study of the Oral law was upheld there. Indeed, Rome, which was of great importance to the Jews in Palestine, was certainly kept well informed in the progress of the studies of the schools. Rome must have had its prayer-book early settled, which spread from here to all Italy, since Qalonymos of Lucca, who, according to a legend,² settled at Mayence under the Emperor Charles, introduced the Italian ritual in the congregations of the Rhine provinces, and it spread from there to France. Italy never asked the Geonim to send them the rules for the prayers, as did the Spanish Jews with Amram Gaon.³ When the Jews of Spain ransomed the prisoner Moses, and proclaimed him as their Rabbi,⁴ Southern Italy had had theirs a long time. That there was no book written before the close of the Talmud is not a proof of ignorance; it may have been out of respect for the Palestinian schools, and later on (when this school was broken up) for the Babylonian schools of the Talmud, that the Italian Rabbis refrained from writing down their Halakhic interpretations.

That Rome had influenced the provinces cannot be doubted. We have already mentioned Lucca. Alcuin, the learned friend of Charlemagne, mentions a religious controversy at Pavia in 800 between the Jew Julius and Peter of Pisa. It is probable that the Jew Isaac, who was sent on a mission by Charlemagne to the court of Harun Al-Rashid was a native of Lombardy. In 887 a Jew named Zedekias is mentioned, who acted as physician to Charles the Bald in Upper Italy.⁵ Controversialists, diplomatic agents and physicians are usually men of culture and learning;

¹ *Leg. ad Cajum*, Zunz, *ibid.*, p. 332.

² See *Revue des Etudes Juives*, T. xxiii., p. 233.

³ See the introduction to this *Siddur*.

⁴ *Sepher haq-Qabala* (ed. Oxford, *Med. Jewish Chronicles*), p. 63.

⁵ Güdemann, *Geschichte des Erziehungswezens und der Cultur der Juden in Italien*, Wien, 1884, p. 14.

and, besides, a Jew must have had knowledge of Jewish teaching; for a controversialist, indeed, the last is indispensable.

Before turning to the South of Italy we shall just mention the island of Sardinia, to which Tiberius banished 4,000 Jews (19 C.E.), and where we find in the sixth century a large congregation at Cagliari.¹ Indeed, the famous liturgist Kalir was once considered to be a native of this town. Two learned Jews are mentioned here in the eighth century, viz., Abraham who is said to have copied and deciphered Greek and Phœnician inscriptions, and another named Canaim (perhaps a corrupted form of Honein). Jewish physicians are also mentioned from time to time. Pope Gelasius (towards the end of the fifth century) recommends to a bishop the physician Telesinus, the very learned man and friend, with the following reservation "*quamvis judaicæ credulitatis esse videatur*," words which were taken in the sense that Telesinus was a converted Jew.²

Let us come now to the southern provinces. Here we find at Naples a respectable congregation of Jews, who distinguished themselves in the war against Belisarius (536 C.E.), according to Procopius.³ No mention is made of distinguished members of the congregation, but there can be no doubt that it possessed a religious chief. We have no Jewish inscription yet from the catacombs of Naples, neither have the Jewish cemeteries there been discovered as yet. More fortunate, however, were the antiquarians at Venosa, in the province of Naples—for the description of them we refer to Professor Ascoli's very learned essay already mentioned—where epitaphs similar to those at Rome have been lately found. They are also in Greek, and a few in Latin, when even the word *Shalom* is expressed with Greek characters; once we find שָׁלוֹם. Some epitaphs are written in Latin and

¹ Gûdemann, *ibidem*.

² Gûdemann, *op. cit.*, p. 15, Ascoli, p. 265.

³ Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, 2nd ed., T. v., p. 40.

in Hebrew; many have a longer formula, *e.g.*, שלום על ישראל אמן (Peace upon Israel: Amen); and in one the Greek is written with Hebrew characters. These epitaphs, which are in a catacomb, are not dated; they are most likely earlier than those which are engraved in stone, not only at Venosa but also at Brindisi and Lavello, the earliest of which is of 810 C.E. These are written in tolerably pure Hebrew, and the dates are given either from the destruction of the Jewish Temple or from the Creation, sometimes both together. These dates are different from those of the Babylonian schools, who employed usually the era of the Seleucidæ. The use of Hebrew in the later epitaphs is not exactly a proof that learning became more advanced and general, for the individual knowledge of the minister of the congregation would be sufficient for this purpose. Yet it is a sign that Hebrew was preferred in connection with religious ceremonies. The current style of these epitaphs might help for fixing dates and countries of anonymous writings, but this is not always the safest method, for the style of epitaphs, and even of liturgies, might be an imitation. Indeed, the Aden epitaphs are almost in the same style as those of Venosa with the differences of the era employed for the dates.¹

From the decrees of Gregory the Great, Pope Honorius, and many Councils, we may conclude that Jews were spread over the whole of Italy, including Sicily, as early as the sixth century and later on. About Bari and Otranto there is a saying by R. Jacob Tam, of Rameru: "Out of Bari shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Otranto" (Isaiah ii. 3). Jacob, who lived in the twelfth century, seems to give this saying as an old one. Indeed, we shall see at once that at least Otranto was of importance with regard to Jewish learning as early as the eighth century. Bari was the starting point of four rabbis, who became the chiefs of Cairo, Kairowan, and Cordova.²

¹ See JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW, iii., p. 621.

² Chronicle of Abraham b. David, Ed. Oxford, p. 68.

If Dr. Porges's ingenious conjecture is accepted,¹ an epitome² of a manual for the reader of the law was brought at an early epoch from Jerusalem to Bari, probably written in Hebrew, and epitomised in Arabic by Joseph ben Hiyya. The Arabic text was later translated into Hebrew at Mayence by Nethaniel, son of Meshullam, or, according to another MS., by Meshullam, son of Nethaniel.

We now come to documents concerning South Italy, and more especially Otranto.

Zunz³ has pointed out that, according to commentators, the *פיומן* beginning with *ישראל נושע* and the *סליחה* which follows, beginning *אני יום אירא*,⁴ which are recited in the Germanico-Polish rite on the third day of the regular Selihah-days before the New Year, are attributed to a R. Shephatyah, who composed it on the occasion when he saved five congregations of thousands in the Byzantine empire from forced conversion. This calamity was threatened under the emperor Basil the Second⁵ (called the Macedonian); Shephatyah was successful in this through curing the Emperor's daughter of insanity.

The editions of the commentaries on the *סליחות* becoming rare now, we shall give the passage *verbatim*, with the variation found in the MS. of the library of Baron H. Günzburg, in St. Petersburg, No. 615.⁶ Possibly it is the

¹ See *Revue des Etudes Juives*, t. xxiii., p. 310, *sqq.*

² This is the meaning of the words *קצרה בדרך*, as in the Colophon of the Vatican MS.; "by a short road," as Dr. Porges suggests, seems to us strange. There was only one road from Jerusalem to Bari at that early epoch; besides, a short road would be expressed in Hebrew by *בדרך קרובה*. Perhaps the right reading of the heading should be thus: *זה ספר הוריית הקורא בדרך קצרה אשר הובא*.

³ *Littg. der Syn. Poesie*, p. 16.

⁴ According to the MS. Shephatyah is the author of the *סליחה* only. See p. 614.

⁵ Zunz believed that the calamity took place under Basil I. (976-1011). Graetz (*Geschichte der Juden*, V., p. 254, 2nd ed.) corrects Zunz, but the date is not given.

⁶ The MS. gives the name of Judah ben David as the compiler of the commentary.

same MS. which Zunz mentions without any indication of its *provenance*. It is as follows:—

זה הפזמון והסליחה שאחריו אני יום אירא וכולו מצאתי
שיסד אותם רבי שפטיה¹ בגזירת בסיליאן² הרשע שגזר שמד
בכל ארץ יון והכריח³ יותר מאלף קהילות למעוֹתם ולא נשאר
בכל ארץ יון (מדינה ומדינה עיר ועיר שלא פיתה אותם)⁴
זולתי⁵ המש קהילות שהצילם ר' שפטיה על ידי שריפא בתו
של מלך⁶ שנמרפה דעתה וריפא אותה על ידי שם ובטל אותה
גזירה⁷ שלא פשטה באותן ה' קהילות שבמלכות⁸ יון [וכך היו
מכריחין אותם כל אחד שהיה ממאן למעוֹתם היו מכניסים
אותו לבית הבד ונורגין עץ עליו וכותשין אותו כמו שכותשין
זתים בבית הבד וזהו שיסד בהסליחה חתוך השאר כתשם
בבית הבד ושמו חתם בפזמון הזה דהיינו שְעִרִיך פָּחוּדִים
שְׂבוֹתִיך יוֹשִׁיעוּ הֶקְשִׁיבם ר"ת שפטיה⁹

Prof. Graetz¹⁰ said that, according to an unauthentic document, Shephatyah saved these congregations from forced conversion. The statement is, however, found in a MS. of the Cathedral Library of Toledo, which contains a chronicle important for the Jewish settlement in Southern Italy. We shall give here a short notice only of it so far as concerns our subject, but this chronicle will appear *in extenso* in a second part of the Mediæval Jewish Chronicles. The date of Basil's persecution is given here as the year 4628 A.M.=868 C.E. We shall find that the style, written in rhymed prose, has great similarity with that of the famous Kalir. Unfortunately the MS. presents many lacunæ, and these sometimes in the most interesting parts. It was compiled in the year 4814 A.M.=1054, and is, therefore, contemporaneous with Rashi. The compiler says that his ancestors were brought in a ship which went to the river Po (lacuna

¹ MS. אני יום אירא אליך אקרא שמעתי שיסד סליחה זו.

² Ed. Cracow, 1584, and Venice, 1600, בולו; ed. Amsterdam, 1504, פולו.

³ MS., להכריח. ⁴ The words in parenthesis are only in the MS.

⁵ Editions, רק.

⁶ Ed. אותו רשע.

⁷ MS., את הנורה.

⁸ MS., שקבצה מלכות.

⁹ The words in brackets are not in the MS.

¹⁰ *Geschichte der Juden*, t. v., p. 244. *Eine unverbürgte Nachricht erzählt.*

. . . (בנהר פא) with the exiles after the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. They gathered at (lacuna), where their posterity attended to the law, teaching fervently, and many *Paitanim* arose among them. The first of them were R. Shephatyah, R. Hananel and Elazar, of the family Yoab. At the same epoch came Ahron, of the land בגרידים (Bagdad (Babel ?), read בגרידים). He was obliged to leave the country, took a ship at (to ?) Gaeta, where he found a Sepharadic (Spanish) Jew, and reached Benevento, where the whole congregation received him. Then follows the mention of Ahiamaz, who made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem three times a year, and of R. Selano,¹ at Benevento. Next comes mention of the persecution of Basil, with the date 800 after the destruction of the Temple. He sent out his messengers to Otranto, went from there by water to Puglia, and reached Oria in order to induce R. Shephatyah to come to Constantinople to dispute with him. The king asked R. Shephatyah to tell him on which building most money was spent, on the Temple of Jerusalem or on St. Sophia, and here the healing of the princess is related. Twenty-five years his persecution lasted, until his son, Leo, abolished the hard decrees of his father.

At that time, the chronicler continues, the Arabs began to invade the country, which we omit here. Abou Ahron, already mentioned above, went to Bari, where he was received by the Saracen prince.

Next comes a narrative of what happened at Oria (אויירי), when R. Hananel, brother of Shephatyah, was summoned before the *Hegemon* for a disputation concerning the calculation of the new moon, which threatened to endanger Hananel's life. אויירי is also mentioned in connection with a Pentateuch with superlinear vowel-points. In *Cod. de Rossi* 12 (now 2004) MS., at Parma, we read the following colophon:²— תרגום זה בנקודו נערק מכפר אשר

¹ This name occurs in the epitaphs of Venosa. See Ascoli, p. 316.

² See Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, V., p. 552, where מננצא and מנחם is wrong. Nathan ben Machir mentioned here is not identical with his homonym of Mayence. See also Merx, *Chrestomathia Targumica*, p. 55.

הובא מארץ בבל וחיה מנוקד למעלה בנקוד ארץ אשור והפכו
 ר' נתן בר מכיר בר מנחם מאנקונא בר שמואל בר מכיר
 ממדינת אויירי בר שלמה הוא אשר גזע קרן המתלוצץ בארץ
 רומנצא בשם המבורך בר אנתוס¹ בר צדוק הנקדן והגיהו
 ונסחו לנקוד טברני² :

The date when the codex was brought from Babylonia to Oria³ is not known, but most likely early, perhaps in the time of Shephatyah. Nor do we know the meaning of the allusion made here that Nathan or Salomon broke the horn of the mocker in the land Romaza (Romayna ?)

Shephatyah is, perhaps, identical with the Rabbi who, it is said, composed a part of the prayer which is recited on Mondays and Thursdays, beginning with the words וְהוּא רַחוּם. We read in the commentary on the prayers, contained on the margin of the MS. No. 1102 (fol. 23) of the Bodleian Library, the following statement; after mentioning that וְהוּא רַחוּם is recited on Monday and Thursday, because the *Beth Din* was sitting on these days, the commentator continues thus:—וְיֵשׁ אוֹמְרִים שׁוּחָא רַחוּם שְׁלֹשָׁה גָּאוֹנֵי עוֹלָם—'סְדוּחָו • ר' אֲמִיתִי וְר' שִׁפְטִיָּה וְר' יוֹסֵפִיָּה אֲשֶׁר הִגְלָם טִיטוֹס הִרְשַׁע עִם שָׂאֵר הַגּוֹלָה אֲשֶׁר הִגְלָתָה מִירוּשָׁלַיִם וְהֵאֲרִיכוּ יָמִים וּשְׁנִים אַחֵר חוֹרְבָן וְלֵאחֵר יָמִים נִפְגַּר טִיטוֹס הִרְשַׁע בְּתַחֲלוֹאִים רַעִים וְלֹא עָמַד לְרוֹמֵי מֶלֶךְ עַד לֵאחֵר כְּמָה שְׁנִים כְּמוֹ שֶׁנִּמְצָא בִּסְפָר יוֹסִיפּוֹן בִּשְׁנַת עֶשְׂרִין וּשְׁמוֹנֶה לַחֲוֹרְבָן הַבֵּית קָם עֲלֵמָא בְּלִי מֶלֶכָא • וְכִיּוֹן שִׁפְסָקָה יִרְאֵת מַלְכוּת עֲמָדוֹ צָרִים וְחֲדָשׁוֹ גִּזְרֹת רַעוֹת וּמִשׁוֹנוֹת עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעֲמָדוֹ אֵילָו שְׁלֹשָׁה עֲמֻדֵי עוֹלָם וַיִּסְדּוּ וְהוּא רַחוּם • אֶחָד מֵהֶם יֹסֵד עַד אֲנָא מֶלֶךְ • וְהַשְׁנִי יֹסֵד מֵאַנָּה עַד אֵין כְּמוֹךְ • וְהַשְּׁלִישִׁי יֹסֵד מֵאֵין כְּמוֹךְ עַד סוֹפּוֹ • וְכַתְּבוּ וְשַׁלְּחוּ כְּתָבִים וְשַׁלְּחוּ בְּכָל הַגּוֹלָה לֵאמֹרוּ בְּכוֹונַת הַלֵּב בְּיוֹם קְרִיאַת הַתּוֹרָה בְּאִסְפֵּית עַם • לִכְךָ נִהְגוּ לְכוֹתְבוּ בְּגוֹיִלָּין וּגְלָגִלִּים כְּעַנְיִין מְגִילַת אֶסְתֵּר : ע"א כְּשֶׁחָרַב טִיטוֹס הִרְשַׁע אֶת הַבֵּית מִיֵּלָא שְׁלֹשָׁה סְפִינּוֹת אֲנָשִׁים וְנָשִׁים בְּלֹא רֵב הַחוּבֵל וְשַׁלַּח הֶקֶל רוּחַ סַעֲרָה וְהַשְּׁלִיכֶם לִיבְשָׁה בְּשִׁלּוֹשׁ מַלְכוּיּוֹת • סְפִינָה

¹ Perhaps to read אֲנָתוֹס, Ἀναθός = טוביה.

² Compare for the singular style the document quoted above, p. 614.

³ Perhaps the enigmatic word אִירִי (see the Catal. of the Hebrew MSS. in the Bodleian Library, col. 421), is a corruption of אוֹיִירִי.

אחת באתה בארץ שנויא והשיני בארץ אנציליאי והשלישי
בארץ אפריקיא והיו ביניהם שלשה חכמים וצדיקים וזקנים ועלו
שלשתם מירכתי ספינה לחלות המלך אפריקיא שיתן להם
רשות לשבת בארצו • ואמר להם המלך מאין אתם ומאיזה
אומה אתם • אמרו לו יהודים אנחנו ומזרעו של אברהם אבינו
אמר להם אם מזרעו של אברהם אתם יבחנו דברים אם
תוצאו להנצל מן האור כמו שנוצל אברהם מאור כשדים קחו
אחד מכם אם יבחן באור אם ינצל אמלא כל משאלותיכם ואתנו
תשבו והארץ תסחרו • וכיון ששמעו כך נשתנו זיו פניהם
ושאלו ממנו זמן שלשה ימים נתן להם זמן וצוה לאוסרם בבית
המשמר עמדו בתפילה ובתחנונים ויסד אחד מהם והוא רחום
עד אנא מלך • וביום השני יסד השני מאנא עד אין כמוך •
וביום השלישי יסד השלישי מאין כמוך עד סופו • וכיון שהגיע
יום שלישי היו שואלים זה את זה מה תלמת באילו ג' לילות
ענה אחד מהם ואמר בכל אותן ג' לילות הללו הייתי קורא
בחלומי כי תלך במו אש לא תכוה • כיון ששמעו כך שמחו
שמחה גדולה ואמרו זה לזה אתה תנצל מן האש ובשורה
היא לך שלא יגע בך האור להזיקך חזרו לפני המלך והשליך
בעל חלום באור והצילו הק' ית' שמו ויצא שלם וחושבים
המלך במיטב ארצו וישבו וירבו מאד מאד :

“Some say that the prayer רחום והוא was composed by the three great men, R. Amithai,¹ R. Shephatyah, and R. Yosiphiah, who were amongst the exiles of Jerusalem in the time of the wicked Titus. They lived a long time after the destruction of the Temple. When Titus died of grievous sickness there was no king in Rome for many years, as is found in the book *Yosipon* (the pseudo-Josephus). In the twenty-eighth year of the destruction of the Temple, the world stood without a king. When thus the fear of the king ceased, enemies arose, and divers calamities came upon Israel. At that time these three pillars of the world rose, and composed the prayer mentioned above—the one as far as the words **אנא מלך**; the second the continuation to **כמוך** ; אין ; and the third continued to the end of the prayer. They wrote letters, and

¹ He is also mentioned in the *Toledo Chronicle*.

sent them to the captivity, asking that this prayer should be recited with deep feeling of heart on the days when the law is read (*i.e.*, on Mondays and Thursdays), and when the nation assembles. Therefore this prayer is written, like the Book of Esther, on vellum, and with ornaments in circular form.

“Another tradition is the following:—When the wicked Titus had destroyed the Temple, he sent out three ships filled with men and women, without a captain. God sent a stormy wind, and they were landed in three kingdoms, the one in Genoa,¹ the second in Sicily,² and the third in Africa. There were amongst the last three wise, pious old men, who went ashore in order to pray the King of Africa to permit their landing in his dominion. The king asked them, ‘Whence do you come, and to what nation do you belong?’ They replied, ‘We are Jews, of the seed of Abraham our father.’ The king said, ‘If it be so, your words shall be tested in your delivering yourselves from the fire, as Abraham was saved from Ur Casdim; thus take one of your men, and if he will pass the trial I will fulfil your demands; you shall dwell with us and traffic in the land’ (Gen. xlii. 34). Having heard this, the brightness of their face became changed, and they asked for three days’ reflection. The king granted the respite, and ordered that they should be put into prison. They began to pray, and one of them composed the first day וְהוּא רַחוּם up to

¹ Dr. J. Perles (*Monatsschrift für Geschichte des Judenthums*, 1876, p. 373) has published the same legend from the MS. at the Royal Library at Munich, No. 423, fol. 36. In this MS. (evidently a shortened copy of our MS., see JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW, IV., p. 23) the two legends are mixed up in one. Dr. Perles proposes to read שְׁבוּיָא for שְׁנוּיָא, and identifies it with Savoy. Dr. H. Gross (*op. cit.*, t. xxvii. (1878), p. 64, note 2) says rightly that the land of Savoy reached to the sea in the 13th or 14th century only; he, therefore, conjectures the reading of שְׁפִינְיָא, which is very plausible. The only objection is that the prayer וְהוּא רַחוּם never took root in the Hispanico-Eastern rite.

² Dr. Perles reads אֵיטַלְיָא for our אֵנְצִילְיָא, which is distinct in the Oxford and Munich MSS. Anyhow, the second name fits for the identification of Shephatyah.

מלך the second composed on the second day up to אין כמוד, and on the third day the third finished the prayer. On that day they asked one another what each had dreamt in these three nights. One of them answered as follows: 'All three nights I read in my dream the following passage: When thou walkest through the fire, thou shall not be burnt' (Isaiah xliii. 2). Having heard that, they rejoiced much, saying one to the other: 'You will be saved from the fire, and the dream is a presage to the effect that the flames will not injure you.' They presented themselves to the king, who had the teller of dreams thrown into the fire; he was saved by God, and came out of the fire uninjured. The king then allotted to the Jews the best part of the land, and they dwelt there and increased much."

Our document is also found in Aramaic, without the names of the three men, in the *Kolbo*, § 18, and elsewhere (see Zunz). We should, indeed, expect to find that a document coming from the Geonim would be composed in Aramaic.

There is another version of the origin of the prayer beginning רחום. In the MS. No. 1,204 of the Bodleian Library, Eleazar of Worms (fol. 90) quotes the following document:—מצינו בדברי הגאונים • תיקון והוא רחום שאנו קורין בשיני ובחמישי מעומד יסדו אנשי השם שהוגלו מירושלים בשעת חרבן הבית והגלו אותם אספסינוס שחיק עצמות וצות לעשות בהם אניות והכניסו בתוכם בלא רב החובל ובלא שום מלח והגרישם בים ועמד עליהם הרוח והשליכם ליבשה בכל פלך ופלך ספינה אחת נתישבה במדינת ליידון • והאחרת במדינת ארלדו והשלישית במדינת בורדיל¹ יצאו מן הכפינה שדות וכרמים והיו שם ימים רבים עד שמת אורו שר וקם עליהם מלך חדש מה שתיקן להם מלך הראשון סתר השיני וזה מחדש להם גזירות רעות שלא היו להם צד להיפנות כי גבר עליהם יד המציק וכח אין ללידה והיו שם ב אחין יוסף

¹ We notice the following variations in MSS. for the names of these three towns, לאודן for לאונדא; ליידון; ארלדו for ארלדון; לאודן, לאפאנרא, ארלדא.

ובנימין ובן דודם היה ביניהם ושמואל שמו והם היו בעצמם מאנשי ירושלם • ויצעקו אל יי' בצר להם וממצוקותיהם הוציאם וישבו בצומות ובתעניות ולבשו שקים על בשרם ושיחרו לאל • ויסדו והוא רחום שלשתן • יוסף יסד והוא רחום עד כי אל מלך חנוך ורחום אתה • ובנימן אחיו יסד מן אנא מלך רחום וחנוך עד אין כמוך • ושמואל בן דודם יסד מאין כמוך עד שמע ישראל יי' אלהינו יי' אחד לאחר שהושיעם וגאלם גואל ישראל מחמת המצור שלהם במיתה מרה וקשה כתבוהו בכתב ועל ידי המעשה שלחו בכל מקומות ישראל לקבל עליהם לומר והוא רחום בשיני ובהמישי :

“We find in the words of the Geonim that the prayer והוא רחום, which is recited on Mondays and Thursdays standing, was instituted by celebrated men, exiled from Jerusalem after the destruction of the Temple by Vespasian. He ordered that they should be put into ships, without captain or seamen, so that the wind drove them on shore, each ship into a different quarter. The one reached Lyon (?), the second Arles, and the third Bordeaux.¹ The exiles left the ships, and settled there on land given them by the prefects of the towns. They lived quietly until a new king arose, who subjected them to many vexations. There were amongst them two brothers, Joseph and Benjamin, and a son of their friend (or uncle) named Samuel, all of them men of Jerusalem. They cried to God, prayed fasting and in sackcloth, and instituted the prayer והוא רחום, according to the same division as above. When God delivered them from their anxiety and hard trouble, they sent to all Israel, asking them to take upon them to recite the והוא רחום on Mondays and Thursdays.”

After the death of Shephatyah, his grandson Paltiel

¹ See Dr. H. Gross' article in the *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums*, vol. xxvii. (1878), p. 64, note 1. Zunz, *Die Literaturgeschichte d. Syn. Poesie*, p. 16. Edelman, *לב הגיון* (p. 89) and S. Baer *עבודת ישראל* (p. 112). Edelman's identification of the first two towns by Lepante and Portugal is out of question, even in a legend. The three towns are evidently meant to be in France.

became the favourite of the Saracenic prince, to whom he predicted that he would reign over Sicily, Africa, and Bologna. Paltiel received the envoy of the Byzantine emperor, and his son Hananel obtained the release of Jewish prisoners made at Bari and Otranto. The chronicle relates the marriage of Paltiel, and his adventures when he went to Africa and accompanied the Moorish king to Egypt. Paltiel was followed by his son Samuel. At the end we learn that the compiler's family settled at Oria, and, on being exiled, settled at Capua. The compiler's name seemed to be Menahem ben Benjamin, as far as we could understand the colophon ; but possibly he was only the copyist.

Thus Bari and Otranto possessed learned rabbis, certainly as early as 870, and most likely before that time. The saying of R. Jacob Tam is thus justified. Many of these rabbis might have been the ancestors of those killed by the Arabs at Oria,¹ in the Province of Otranto, in 925, as there is no doubt that the one named ר' חסדיה בר חננאל הגדול והצדיק is identical with the same name in the above-mentioned genealogy, when the famous physician, Sabbethai Donnolo, was released by ransom at the age of twelve. His parents and relatives, he says, went to Palermo and Africa whilst he remained in the lands under the Roman (Byzantine) Dominion. He studied medicine astronomy, and astrology. His chief work is the commentary on the book *Yetzirah* (of the Creation), which was very ably edited, with a learned preface in Italian by Professor David Castelli, of Florence, in 1880.² Sabbethai visited many countries to gain instruction, but it is not certain that he went so far as Bagdad, as Professor Graetz thought.³ Sabbethai says in his preface that he found a wise man of Bagdad, but not at Bagdad. The date of Donnolo's death, as given by Prof. Graetz, about 970, is not

¹ Not "Averso," as M. Derenbourg writes by inadvertence.

² *Il Commento di Sabbatai Donnolo sul libro della Creazione.*

³ *Geschichte der Juden* (2nd ed.), v., p. 316.

admissible.¹ In the first instance, Donnolo says in his medical notes that he studied medicine more than forty years; born in 913, he should have begun at the age of seventeen, which is rather early.² Besides, we find in a newly-discovered document that Donnolo was still alive in 982, and he mentions that at that time learning was at a very low ebb in his country.³

And that is the epoch when, according to Zunz, Graetz and Güdemann,⁴ the *Pirge de R. Eliezer*, the *Tana de be Eliyahu*, the *Josipon*, and some minor Midrashic treatises were composed in Southern Italy. Were they composed after 924 C.E., or did the authors of them not write in Italy? All this is still a matter of hypothesis. We ought perhaps to have mentioned the famous liturgist, Eleazar Kalir, whom M. J. Derenbourg⁵ places at Porto, near Rome, about 720 C.E. We rather agree with Dr. Harkavy's opinion,⁶ for reasons which would take up too much space here, that Kalir wrote in Palestine, and at a much earlier date. This will be the subject of a special notice.

The settlement of a great number of Jews at Taranto, Otranto and other cities of the province of Puglia, even at Carthago (?) and Sevilla,⁷ is mentioned in the following legendary passage, which possibly contains some truth, derived from an early tradition known at Kairowan. For to judge from the discovery of the trace of an early Synagogue at Hammam-Lif, in Tunisia, probably of the fourth century, by M. Charles Tissot,⁸ it is certain that Jews were settled here about that time or, most likely, earlier. At

¹ Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden* (2nd ed.), t. v., p. 316.

² Steinschneider, *Donnolo*, p. 8, (*Archiv für path. Anatomie*, ed. by Virchow, xxxviii., p. 22).

³ *Revue des Etudes Juives*, t. xxii., p. 214.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, pp. 41 to 55.

⁵ See *Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes*, fasc. 63, p. 437.

⁶ See *Leben und Wirken des Saadjah Gaon* (JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW. t. iv. 490), p. 110.

⁷ Perhaps Carthagena. About the early settlement of the Jews in Spain, see Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, t. v., p. 396.

⁸ See his *Exploration Scientifique de la Tunisie*, ably edited by M. Salomon Reinach, t. ii., p. 127.

Kairowan, indeed, there was a very flourishing Jewish community already in the ninth century, to judge from the visit of Eldad there.¹

At the end of the last chapter of the *Josipon*, which contains the description of the Jewish war under Titus (MS. of the Bodleian Library, No. 793, 2 of the Catalogue, fol. 244, and at the end of the first edition) we read the following passage:²—ויתן מיטוס פקידים על הערים³ אשר השלימו עמו ויעזבם בארץ יהודה ויהי מספר השבי אשר הוליד מיטוס תשעים אלף • ויהי מספר הנופלים בירושלים בחרב וברעב וכל הבאים בירוש' מרחוק ומקרוב והגלויים⁴ והנופלים כולם כאיש אחד אלף אלפים ומאה (ואלף) ושמונת אלפים *ואשר הושיב⁵ ברומה *ואשר נתן⁶ לאביו אלף וחמש מאות ויעזוב⁷ במעבר אשר יצא משם *מן הים⁸ דמשת אלפים [בטראנטו ובאטרנטו] ובשאר המדינות אשר בפוליה⁹ • ויתן אכפסינוס לטיטוס בנו ארץ אפריקה¹⁰ וכל ארץ ספרד ויתן [בקרנתן מן היהודים שלשים אלף ו] *באשפיליא עיר¹¹ ממלכתו היושב על נהר *בוטי ושאר היהודים אשר לכד¹² נתן במקומות אחרות¹³.

The MS. of the Bodleian Library, No. Hebrew d. 11, fol. 197, has at the end of the *Josipon* a similar passage, but much shorter; some geographical names are there given in a more correct form. It reads as follows:—ויתן מיטוס פקידים על הנשאים ויגלם עמו כתשעים אלף איש ויהי מספר הנופלים בירושלים אלף אלפים ומאה אלף ושמונת אלפים • אותם שהושיב ברומי אחת אביו היו אלף וחמש מאות אשר הושיב בטראנטו ובאודרנטו ובשאר מדינות אשר בפויילא כחמשת אלפים • ויתן אכפסינוס לטיטוס בנו את ארץ אפריקא

¹ See JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW, i., p. 108. See also Dr. Harkavy's *Leben und Werke des Saadiah Gaon*, etc., p. 209.

² For the principal variations, MS. means the Bodleian MS.; E. means the first edition; [] only in MS.; () only in E.

³ E., ההגרי. ⁴ MS., והלויים. ⁵ E., והשיב. ⁶ E., ונתן.

⁷ E., ויעבר. ⁸ E., הימה. ⁹ MS., באנפוליה.

¹⁰ E., ארמיניא אפריקא.

¹¹ MS., באנפוליא עד.

¹² E., בט שלשת אלפים. כלבר אשר.

¹³ E., אחרים.

יֵשֶׁב בְּקֶרְטָנוֹ (קֶרְטָנוֹ read) שְׁלֹשִׁים אֲלֶף יְהוּדִים לְבַד מֵאֲשֶׁר
נָתַן בְּשָׂאֵר מְקוֹמוֹת.

"Titus placed governors in the towns which made peace with him, and left them in the land of Judah. The number of prisoners which Titus carried away was 90,000; of those who fell in Jerusalem by sword and hunger, together with those who were spared and returned, was 108,000; of those given to his father and settled at Rome was 1,500; those who settled at Taranto, Otranto and other towns in Puglia, was 5,000. Vespasian gave to his son Titus Africa and Spain, where 30,000 Jews settled in Carthage(?) and in his capital Sevilla on the river Baetis."

Thus we reach the eleventh century, where we find, if not a great school, at least learned men in Sicily,¹ Siponte,² probably also at Salerno, Trani,³ and more especially at Rome, where the Talmudic Lexicon by Nathan, still in use, was finished about 1100.⁴ The following document, although partly published, may perhaps find its place here, being copied from the MS. T. Paris, p. 646, fol. 606, and will confirm our assertion. Dr. Berliner will, no doubt, complete our notice in his monograph on the history of the Jews at Rome. Here we find Mar Jacob Gaon (beginning of the eleventh century) as president of the school at Rome.

מֵתִי יֵשׁ לְמוֹל בְּר"ה אִמֵּר אַבָּא מֵרִי רַבִּי יְהוּדָה בֶּן קִלוּנִימוֹס
זָקֵן בְּשֵׁם מֵרְנָא וְרֵבְנָא ר' יְהוּדָה הַחֲסִיד בְּשֵׁם אֲבִיו רַבִּי ח' שְׁמוּאֵל
הַחֲסִיד שֶׁאֵמֵר בְּשֵׁם רֵבִינוֹ קִלוּנִימוֹס חֲזָקָן בֶּן רֵבִינוֹ
יִצְחָק בֶּן רֵבְנָא אֶלְעִזֵּר הַגָּדוֹל שֶׁאִירַע בְּמִגְנָצָא מִלִּילָה בְּר"ה וְשֶׁאֵלֹ
לְקִדּוּשִׁים רֵבִינוֹ גֵּרְשׁוֹם בְּר' יְהוּדָה מֵאוּר הַגּוֹלָה וְרַבִּי שְׁמוּאֵל
הַגָּדוֹל בְּר' יִצְחָק וְרֵבִינוֹ יְהוּדָה הַכֹּהֵן שֶׁעָשָׂה סֵפֶר הַדִּינִין
וְרֵבִינוֹ יְהוּדָה הַגָּדוֹל שֶׁהָיָה רֹאשׁ לְנַחֲרָגִים וְשֶׁאֵר יוֹשִׁיבֵי הַקְּדוּשָׁה

¹ Owing to the numerous variations, an exact translation is impossible to give, but that there was a settlement of Jews in South Italy under Titus is clear in both texts.

² Güdemann, *op. cit.*, *Ham-maggid*, XVIII., p. 41a.

³ See Mr. Schechter's article in the JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW, t. iv., p. 90 *seq.*

⁴ *Arukh*, ed. Kohut, I., p. x.

והורו כולם למול את הנער לאחר קריאת התורה..... ואני
הקטן מצאתי סמך לדבריהם בתשובת הגאונים רבינו אלעזר בן
רבי יהודה ז"ל ורבנא קלונימוס הזקן איש רומי בן רבנא
משה בבא למדינת גרמיישא לאחר פטירת רבינו יעקב בר יקר
ז"ל ושאלו ממנו דבר והוציא חותם עדות קודש והראה
מכתבו שכבר נשאלה שאילה זו במתא וכתוב כן שאל מר
שלמה היצחקי מן מרנא ורבנא רב נתן גאון שחיבר ספר
הנקרא צרוך ומן מר דניאל אחיו ומן מר אברהם אחיו והשיבו
גם הם שכבר נשאלה בבית מדרשו של אביהם מר יחיאל גאון
יהשיב בשם מר יעקב גאון ריש מתיבתא דמתא רומי דמנהג
כשר הוא להיות מילה סמך לקריאת התורה והקיעת שופר :

A. NEUBAUER.